

Volunteer of Distinction helps new spouses 'get it'

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany - An Army Family Team Building trainer has been named USAG Kaiserslautern's 2006 Volunteer of Distinction. Nancy Sawyer, a retired first sergeant, draws upon her military experience and compassion for others to provide the guidance, counsel and support needed by Army families.

Sawyer worked for free this year, helping new Army spouses understand military life, checking on family members while their Soldiers were deployed, preparing meals and providing transportation for wounded Soldiers. Sawyer said she received more than money could buy after being named as her garrison's top volunteer. "I feel happy. I feel satisfied. I feel like I helped somebody," she said.

Kaiserslautern also recognized 25 Volunteers of Excellence during its recent volunteer recognition ceremony. The Landstuhl TORCH Youth Leadership Club was named 2006 Volunteer Teen Group, and Garrison Kaiserslautern's Better Opportunities for Single Service members took home the Volunteer Group of the Year.

When her husband and his unit were deployed for a year to Afghanistan, Sawyer regularly checked on the unit's families, collected school supplies and clothes and sent about 40 boxes to the unit to give to the 161 surrounding local communities' schools, agencies and orphanages. "It was a great morale builder for the kids and for us to see the smiles across their faces," said Col. Walter Sawyer, her husband of more than 25 years. "I'm glad she was able to be a part of that because it helped us quite a bit downrange."

In her nomination of Sawyer, USAG Kaiserslautern's AFTB program manager Robin Arnold noted that the volunteer provided hours of service as an AFTB master instructor as well as supporting Army Community Service, the Landstuhl Fisher Houses and an American Legion post where she prepares meals for wounded Soldiers and their families.

Sawyer says a high point in her volunteer activities comes when she teaches a class in Army Family Team Building to young spouses. "When I see her 'get it' and the fear going out of her body when she understands and gets knowledge," said Sawyer, "I mean you can't get paid for that."

(Our thanks to Christine June, Public Affairs Office, USAG Kaiserslautern)